

The American School in London

K2: Semester 1 Curriculum Guide

By the end of the first reporting period, these are the ideas, concepts, and skills your child will have learned. We acknowledge that all children learn at different paces, and that it takes the students different lengths of time to master skills and concepts. Your child's teacher will update you on their initial social, emotional, and academic progress at October conferences and provide a more formal report card in February.

Social and Emotional Development

We are a play-based program and value the deep learning and development that occurs during children's play. Learning to play and work together in harmony is one of the most important goals in kindergarten. Children are explicitly taught conflict resolution strategies and are supported to solve social conflicts verbally. We expect children to manage and take responsibility for their own behavior. We focus on the values of empathy, respect, tolerance and sharing throughout the year.

Approaches to Learning

Our class environments and curriculum are designed to promote curiosity, flexibility and creativity. We encourage students to become independent learners, to make appropriate choices and to seek help from peers and adults when needed. We expect students to put forth their best effort, yet be willing to take risks and to learn from their mistakes. Our aim is to foster independence and promote problem solving strategies. The organization and care of work, materials and personal belongings is also a part of being independent in kindergarten. We encourage children to use language to communicate when they need help and to articulate their thinking.

Gross and Fine Motor Development

Gross motor skills are important to enable children to perform everyday functions at school. These include maintaining an upright sitting posture, navigating classroom and play spaces safely and having appropriate levels of movement. Children are also building their stamina to sustain appropriate mental and physical energy throughout the school day. Fine motor skills are necessary to succeed with academic tasks (e.g. cutting, drawing and writing) as well as to complete self care tasks such as independent dressing (coats, packing bags) and eating (managing lunch bags and food). We support the ongoing development of children's sensory systems in music, movement and physical education lessons and provide opportunities for "messy" play.

Speaking and Listening

Communication is a fundamental skill for both academic and social success. Across the curriculum, we focus on developing children's receptive, expressive and nonverbal language skills. Receptive language skills in kindergarten include engaged listening for increasingly longer periods of time and being able to hear, remember and follow two to three step directions. Expressive language skills include speaking clearly to ask questions, articulate thinking and effective communication to solve problems and have needs met. During play times the ability to move flexibly between listening and speaking is an important social skill. Nonverbal communication skills enable children to understand meaning and emotion from the body language, facial expressions and gestures of others.

Reading

We believe that learning to read can be a natural and joyful process in kindergarten. Our classrooms are rich literary environments that promote a love of literacy and the desire to read. In the first half of the year, we focus on foundational literacy skills: language development, phonological awareness (hearing sounds in words) and letter names and sounds. Children are also exposed to a wide selection of children's literature in our classroom libraries and in shared book experiences. Through book conversations, children build vocabulary and develop comprehension tools (e.g. asking questions, making predictions) that support their meaning-making as readers. Using big books, charts and enlarged text we explicitly teach early reading skills and behaviors (e.g. reading left to right with one-to-one matching, noticing patterns, and using clues in pictures and texts.)

Writing

Young children come to writing naturally, beginning with "mark making" and then discovering the magic of written communication. We honor each stage of children's written expression and encourage each child to tell stories with drawings and words through approximation of letter formation and spelling. We gradually introduce standard letter formations and model the connections between the sounds we hear and the letters we write. Children are introduced to different types of writing and write across the curriculum (e.g. labeling, listing as scientists, making menus/letters/signs in play times). Our gradual and joyful approach to writing serves to build children's confidence and independence as they develop their skills and voice as young writers.

Math

Children are engaged and active mathematicians as they make sense of problems and share their thinking. Games, rich tasks, explorations and investigations encourage children to be open to many ways of thinking, and to be creative and curious about big mathematical ideas. Children work both independently and with peers to observe, count, sort, classify, build, graph, and ask questions as they develop their pattern finding and mathematical reasoning skills. We teach mathematics using a range of visuals, books, and tools which help children construct their understandings of concepts and deepen their number sense. Math concepts are also embedded into daily routines (e.g. attendance, days in school, and counting out materials) to help children see how math is important in our everyday lives.

Project Work

Project work is an opportunity for each class to pursue an in-depth investigation of a topic using inquiry. In the first semester, our project work is science-based, and we explore phenomena from the local natural world (e.g. plants, mini-beasts, seeds, etc.) using close observation, recording (often with observational drawings), investigations, data collection, and analysis. We ask children to notice patterns, to think about cause and effect and to design models to show our understandings. Our project work depends and thrives on *wonder*. We wonder: *What do I see when I look closely? How can I show what I see to others? What would happen if...? How did this happen? and What have I learned?*

Creative Arts

The Creative Arts program provides both visual and performing arts opportunities so the children can explore many expressive languages. It is influenced by the Reggio Emilia Approach whereby projects evolve from the children's own interests and curiosity about the world around them, often related to classroom research. Each child is able to develop his or her own creative potential, both individually and in small groups. The students are encouraged to reflect upon and discuss their creative work as they acquire new skills in different media. In art they explore color, pattern, line and form through painting, drawing and modeling and by looking in depth at the work of different artists. In music the children learn songs and action games from a variety of cultural sources, stimulating the recognition of rhythm, tempo and dynamics and fostering an awareness of their own and other cultures. Children become more consistent and confident when using their singing voice and begin to demonstrate a stronger sense of melody. They experiment with tuned and untuned percussion instruments and are developing their listening skills, musical memory and sense of space through movement to music, exploring different skills to encourage individual expression and learning to take turns in group dances and circle games. Spanish is incorporated into the program so they have opportunities to practice greetings, colors, numbers and body parts. In drama children engage in storytelling using real life scenarios, their imaginations and traditional folk and fairy tales.

PE

In the first term of PE, the children explore spatial awareness, locomotor skills, and responding to signals. They participate in activities which reinforce their core strength, balance, tracking and eye hand coordination. Learning to work independently, stay on task, and develop self-control are fundamental principles for early childhood physical education. During cooperative activities, such as spy training, the children begin to take risks, resolve conflicts and practice regulating their emotions.